

A Discourse with Identity:  
An exploration of Postcolonial Dynamics in Graphic Novels

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## Introduction

Post-colonial theorists have analyzed the impact that colonization has on identity where the individual is not only stripped of its pre-existing self but is left to make sense of life after colonization. The repercussions of colonization lie in the individual's inability to go back to life before being colonized, as it is difficult to remove the experiences of colonial subjugation entirely. The lasting impression of the period continues to conflict with the colonized people's perception of their surroundings as well as their relationship with themselves. Most often, the severity of colonization is represented by historical events that have been documented over the years, which provide a general overview of colonial regimes that intended to govern a group of people and impart a desired culture. But when observed through personal life stories, the consequences of colonization seem far more devastating because of its influence on the person's sense of self.

While analyzing postcolonial theory and its effects, graphic novels are an effective medium that allows the reader to associate aspects of their own identity to understand the work of literature along with the graphics. Using individual narratives through graphical representation helps in making meaningful connections to the characters' stories which separates them from their assigned groups of colonizers and the colonized. Graphic novels help the readers comprehend how identity can be personalized where they often find themselves relating to characters that are similar to them in nature and can further reflect on the characters' struggle with their conflicting identities.

Postcolonial studies show how along with damaging the individual's identity, colonialism also changes the relationships between people and affects perceptions regarding different colonial backgrounds. In *La Perdida*, Jessica Abel explains this phenomenon through various characters in the novel who emulate behavioral patterns of people around

them, as an attempt to understand themselves by acquiring an identity. Homi Bhabha, in his essay “On Mimicry and Man” explains this concept as an urge to emerge as authentic through mimicking, which is further depicted in *La Perdida* through graphics with detailed features and characteristics that accentuate the characters’ predicament of accepting themselves for who they are (Abel p. 30, Bhabha p. 671, McCloud p. 155). They surround the understanding of their existence based on the impact of colonial hierarchy that creates conflict for characters throughout the book. The novel highlights the influence of the colonial superpower over a third world nation which furthers into the characters’ preconceived notions about colonial privilege and their attitude towards each other. By applying Scott McCloud’s theory on comics, the readers are given an opportunity to physically observe the ramifications of colonialism through cartoons, icons, and arrangement of panels. These graphics exemplify the characters’ lack of identity and their quest for finding themselves, in a thorough and intricate manner.

Similarly, *Such a Lovely Little War* by Marcelino Truong discusses the misconstrued impression of colonization as exalted, which collides with the experiences of the ordinary people who suffered during the period of Vietnam war. Truong highlights the difficulties of living life like the colonized. Through various examples in the story, he shows the devastating effects of colonization where the characters struggle with the hierarchical disparity allegedly created for their betterment. Albert Memmi’s book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* helps examine the effects of colonization, where an individual experiences a shift in identity as a result of the fear invoked due to oppression (p. 92). This is observed in the memoir when Truong demonstrates this change in the characters who are struggling to make sense of their situation amidst the war. Comic concepts like configurations, transitions and features provide a deeper understanding of the colonized people’s lack of choice in the war

which despite proclaimed for their benefit, is repressive and conflicts with the beliefs and ideals of people in Vietnam.

In *Rolling Blackouts*, Sarah Glidden uses a collection of narratives, which when put together in the form of a graphic memoir, allows the readers to witness lives of the colonized beyond their categorization. The narratives in the memoir threaten the idea of the colonized deserving unjust treatment from the colonizer, as the interviews describe the true lives of the people and questions the reasons behind their oppression. Glidden emphasizes on the personal identities of the colonized that are lost in a generalized depiction, so instead of assigning them with an identity by writing their story for them, she provides a platform for the colonized to express their situation in their words. Frantz Fanon, in “On National Culture” explains the idea behind colonial subjugation as an attempt to immerse the people into the colonizer’s culture, and Glidden shows this in her memoir by using different perspectives of both the colonized as well as the colonial agents, to explore the reasons behind giving someone an identity (Fanon p. 640). She uses combinations, additive art of comics, and colors in her graphics to portray how colonization prescribes and imposes an identity, which is removed from the colonized people’s true stories.

*Delhi Calm*, the graphic novel by Vishwajyoti Ghosh focuses on colonization within the country through the nationwide ‘emergency’ in India, and its effects on the common man. The novel highlights how the regulations of the emergency were similar to the colonial practices which endangered the common man’s identity by taking away their freedom of speech and basic needs. This clashed with the citizens’ idea of democracy and freedom, as it was a colonial regime undertaken by their own government. Several methods of implementing the emergency were severe and tyrannical, that left the population of the nation to fend for itself where the common man’s existence was being defined by its government’s

idea of their nation. In “Selective Control: The Political Economy of Censorship”, an article by Cristina Corduneanu-Huci and Alexander Hamilton explains how this allowed the government to pursue private agendas without the risk of being scrutinized as their main aim is to help the nation (p. 6). Through nonvisual awareness and time frames, the readers can develop a sense of the torture conducted in order to feed the agenda of giving the nation a new identity, while disregarding the situations of the people who were exploited in the process.

The basis of colonization lies in imparting culture to those in need of assistance that is then used as a medium to identify colonized people and justify the oppressive treatment towards them. These graphic novels remove the preconceived ideas about the characters’ colonial backgrounds by showing the readers the true causes of their situations without the associated indicators of colonial hierarchy. They provide the readers with the characters’ personal narratives of their subjugation and the effects of colonization on their identity, where the comics offer a more personable viewpoint into the lives of the colonized.

## Chapter 1

### **A Pursuit of Self: An Examination of Struggling Identities in *La Perdida***

Jessica Abel, in her graphic novel *La Perdida*, paints the story of a woman named Carla who travels to Mexico in search of her Mexican heritage. Her journey from knowing more about the people and culture soon becomes a struggle to survive and fit in a place where she was considered different. Through her experiences with local people, she realized that there was anger and resentment from the place that she was from. Despite having Mexican heritage, Carla was seen as a privileged American whose exploration was perceived as an act of vanity and not patriotism. Abel, through her detailed graphics, shows these differences in culture, heritage, and the way of living, that gives readers an idea of how a lot of characters in the story have a lack of understanding of being colonized. Abel gently hints the misconceptions of how colonialism affected people and at the same time, reflects on how each individual follows their personal quest for identity. Various characters in the story have their own definition of what colonialism looks like and then offer their own revolutionary solutions which seem parallel to the struggle with their own identities.

In examining post-colonial cultures, patterns emerge where the colonized struggle to develop and maintain an identity. In order to give meaning to their daily reality, they often strive to reclaim the past which for them, signifies fundamental importance. Frantz Fanon in his essay “On National Culture”, explains how colonized peoples try to glorify their pre-colonized culture and heritage, where they are desperate to be relevant. Art and literature, for example, help people relate themselves to their culture, the culture that they feel is already threatened, and on the verge of extinction. In *La Perdida*, Abel shows how Carla, after seeing Frieda Kahlo’s paintings in college, uses limited information to better understand the country’s culture and heritage. She looks up to her as a person who expressed her passion of Mexico and Mexican people through her works. Carla’s forced attempts of resonating with



this artist is very evident in the book where she so much as imitates her hairstyle (Abel p.20). Frida's passion for the country and its people was something that Carla craved and aimed to achieve when she exclaims how "She was more than my ideal of an artist, she was my ideal woman. All I wanted was to be more like her" (Abel, p. 20). She associates her identity with Frida's accomplishments which for a very long time defines her sense of the country and the people. Abel advances this narrative by hinting subtle changes in Carla's sense of self through moment-to-moment transition, as defined by Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics*, when she and Oscar share their first kiss (p. 52). She seized this opportunity to further authenticate her identity by being with a local Mexican. To Carla, Frida was the closest thing she knew about being Mexican. By trying to resonate with her, she silently wished for it to be the thing that will connect her to her roots, and more importantly, to herself. Her connection to Frida starts to fade as she continues to shed her American identity when Abel uses "dynamic and changing" lines as Carla's identity changes once again as a result of her desperation to achieve Mexican authenticity (McCloud p. 125, Abel p.52). Carla, in order to find herself tried to use Frida as a vehicle that would bring her closer to knowing who she was from, and the place that she was visiting. At this point, Carla struggles to resonate with even Frida, in her diligent attempts of connecting to her roots.

A lot of contemporary trends are based on further stereotyping art, where the true nationality of a place is often defined by its national art. These artifacts portray or try to replicate "the detritus of social thought, external appearances, and knowledge frozen in time" (Fanon, p. 636). To achieve this, the post-colonial individuals question the reality of truth through the colonized landscapes and thus defend their lost heritage by placing themselves in the context of history and national cultures. Frida who is also biracial, represents a cultural authenticity which Carla is struggling to experience in her journey to connect with her Mexican roots. Carla's admiration does not last very long when she gets into a heated

argument with Memo when he called her a conquistadora which led to Carla destroying her biracial identity by ripping apart the poster to show Memo how hard she is “trying to be like a Mexican” (Abel, p. 106). Her desire to be more Mexican made her resort to the first thing she found that was close enough to her idea of who she wants to be. Fanon explains this to be a product of when “(...) the individual wrenches himself from quagmire which threatens to suck him down, and [is] determined to believe what he finds, he accepts and ratifies it with heart and soul” (Fanon, p. 633). Carla was afraid that if she did not convince Memo, she would never be able to convince herself of who she is and justify her existence. Abel demonstrates this behavior by making her emotions visible through frustration as she rips apart Frieda’s poster. (McCloud p. 118). She does this to seek some sort of acceptance from Memo by trying to do what he thinks is right, thereby breaking everything that she had assumed was a part of her Mexican identity. Abel then uses expressionism in her next graphic to exhibit Carla’s inner turmoil that she could not repress while pleading in front of Memo (McCloud p. 122, Abel p. 106). By doing this, Carla tries to embrace another identity yet again which would allow her the space to interact with Memo, who she idolizes next, after Frida.

Through a variety of scenes in the book Abel shows how Carla’s idea to understand the life and culture turns out mostly generic. She herself admits to the fact that she was acting like a tourist and was “checking off the Must-Do-In-Mexico list” (Abel, p.30). Her unfortunate attempt at imitating the curated clichés in order to fit in, leaves her wanting, as she desires to have an “authentic” Mexican experience. What Carla fails to realize that by doing the stereotypical sightseeing, she herself negates her purpose of wanting to belong and learn from a closer lens. Abel uses duo-specific panels where the reader can make the same meaning from the text as well as the illustrations as to how Carla is failing to fit in. (McCloud p, 153). In the graphics, she stands out as a lone tourist in a group of indistinguishable faces.

Carla tries to use cultural mementos, to gather a sense of her identity and decides to extend her stay in order to achieve that goal. In Homi Bhabha's essay "On Mimicry and Man", he explains how "the desire to emerge as "authentic" through mimicry—through a process of writing and repetition—is the final irony of partial representation" (Bhabha, p. 671). By imitating something original, one can hardly achieve that level of originality, and at the same time they lose the beauty of its authenticity. Carla imitates a tourist mentality and finds everything exotic and magical which feeds into her crisis. Abel uses McCloud's interdependent theory "where words and pictures go hand in hand to convey an idea that neither could convey alone" (McCloud p. 155, Abel p.30). The text shows how Carla saw herself technically as a tourist, which is complimented well by the scene where she stands out in the crowd of local Mexican people. The graphic Abel uses to convey this, allows readers to understand how Carla was desperately looking for any incident and label it as inherently Mexican to better understand herself.

As Carla establishes herself in Mexico, she begins to develop a second identity and favors the locals over her friends and family. Michelle Bumatay, in her essay "Plural Pathways, Plural Identities" explains Jean- Phillippe Stassen's illustration of the relationship between the barriers and identity. He seeks to "expose [people] to the possibility of plurality- plural points of view, plural histories, plural cultures, and plural identities" (Bumatay p, 30). She explains how one can get confused about their identity, because of the relationship they have had in embracing the plurality of their culture. In order to do justice to one part of their identity, the other often gets neglected, resulting into an imbalance. Carla knew that she was biracial but living in the US had made her journey smooth and privileged. Upon visiting Mexico, Carla observed the difficulties that people had to face while living in a third world country. She develops feelings of resentment towards America, its people, and its culture. Carla exhibits this by challenging the privilege of her American friends and accusing them of

being tourists. Carla's relationship with her American friends starts to shift as Abel represents her dynamic and savage attitude through the slanting lines to let her readers feel Carla's desire to distance herself from her identity. Carla feels threatened by the company of her American friends in fear of losing the identity that she has just begun to discover in Mexico (Abel p. 56-57). Abel shows Carla's internal struggle to achieve this when she "ascribe[s] those feelings, not to [her reader], but to the characters [the readers] identify with" (McCloud p. 125,132). The aftermath of colonialism led to masses believing that they could only do justice to one part of their identity and if they embrace a plural identity, they are fabricating the culture that existed before they were colonized. Instead of coming to terms with the changes in her life in Mexico, Carla lashes it out on her American friends, thereby shunning the plural identity that she had recently begun to develop. She fails to create a balance and sides with her Mexican self, by assuming that will help her achieve the understanding of her true self.

Another character in the story that struggles with his identity is Memo. He sees himself as an intellectual who expresses extreme disdain towards the American government. He tries to impose his opinion of how after colonization, the colonizers' privilege allowed them to establish common grounds whenever it was convenient. Due to the impact of cultural colonization, the colonizers were able to portray the authenticity of their world, which further inhibited the colonized to understand who they were, as the subjects struggled to distinguish between what was forced on them in the name of reality vs. what their culture originally comprised of. Memo's ideas are clouded with bias as he explains patriotism in a hateful way when he says, "You are Americans. I don't expect you to know what it is to live in a Third World country" (Abel p. 26). He disapproves of anything 'American' in the name of nationalistic pride, which is short-lived as Carla shifts from identity to identity through the course of the book. Abel avoids using "(...) vivid detail" to illustrate Memo but rather uses

cartoon features to amplify how, similar to her readers, the characters that interact with Memo notice his lack of identity and instead see him as a representation of themselves (McCloud p. 35-36). When Memo was detesting American privilege, to Carla it meant different to what it meant to Sylvia and by using cartoon figures Abel allows her readers to see parts of themselves in it. This is very similar to how the colonized see parts of themselves in their intellectual counterparts. In Fanon's essay he explains how in order to develop a sense of renaissance, 'intellectuals' came into existence, who then placed themselves in history and strived to revive the diminishing essence of their pre-colonial past. As demonstrated by Memo, this nationalistic pride, as Fanon puts it, allows these 'intellectuals' to propagate the idea of shunning everything that was colonized in order to remain true to their self (and to their nation). Memo's definition of national culture is not defending his country or people, but he himself is struggling to maintain a singular identity. His opinions change depending on convenience, because he also cannot completely understand what he truly identifies with as he quickly changes his political ideology, by learning English for his own gains and participating in the murder of a fellow Mexican.

There is a major discrepancy in the lifestyles of Harry and Carla and the readers can witness that when they share an apartment. Harry follows the conventional prescriptive approach of colonization where he claims to write a book about the people in Mexico, but barely spends anytime with anyone and chooses to be a stranger. When Carla tries to convince him to meet more Mexicans he says "I prefer to be an outsider, looking in. I don't want to know anything 'official' because it might muddy my impressions. I'm trying to make it pure in a way" (Abel, p. 23). His character is highly inspired by Kerouac, who wrote *Mexico City Blues* which does not essentially represent Mexican culture in its entirety. He hangs out with his elitist white friends and counts that as a part his foreign cultural experience. Abel juxtaposes Harry and Carla in her graphic to mirror their contrasting

purposes for being in Mexico (McCloud p.7-9). When Carla tries to convince Harry to interact with more Mexicans, she exhibits a sense of self, since she is interested in meeting the local people. Harry shows an ethnocentric bias of Mexico when he refuses to listen to Carla and continues with his book, which is primarily what colonizers do when they prescribe the colonized, a concept of culture but lack to understand the sense of what that culture is. Renato Rosaldo, in his article “Imperialist Nostalgia” observes how “colonialist cultures often romanticize the people they colonize, thus trying to hide from themselves their own responsibility of social change and devastation that colonialism continues” (p.748). They create a façade where they pretend to be a part of the colonized culture, as Harry did, but they are not immersing or experiencing their struggles. Harry embraces his privilege while still being in a third world country, by spending all his time drinking and pretending to work, because he has a rich family to fall back on.

Sylvia is another interesting example of the impact of colonization on individual identity. The colonized suffer because the colonizers take everything from them until there is nothing left to take. Abel uses symbolism to articulate meaning in her graphic when Sylvia chokes on the air of Mexico as she struggles with her own identity (McCloud p. 131, Abel p. 21). Living in Mexico for three years, she is unable to decide if this is something she resonates with, or if it was just another exotic vacation for her. She acts like a colonizer when she enjoys the benefits of living in the country but complains about their shortcomings. Sylvia’s complaining is just her experiencing what is like to not have the privilege that she has had her most life. Rosaldo in his article explains how “Under imperialism Metropolitan observers are no more likely to avoid a certain complicity with domination than they are to avoid strong feelings toward the people (...)” (p. 748). It is unlikely for the colonizers to stop colonization and equally as unlikely to love the people they colonized. Sylvia is in a way, reinstills the idea of colonization by teaching English to the Mexicans as she perpetuates her

privilege while establishing English as the dominant language. Even though she lives in Mexico, she enjoys privilege in Mexico, she struggles to accept her identity as she is less privileged than she was in America.

Over time, colonizers too suffer from confused identities as they make sense of who they were and how their relationship with the colonized have changed. Post colonization, they seek to develop of a sense of self which allows them to feel less guilty of their previous actions and enjoy privilege at the same time. Carla silently tolerates Memo's bashing because she feels like she deserves the treatment since she comes from a strong economy. At the same time, she is romanticizing the idea of being Mexican by "simply replicating the biases of what [she is] trying to avoid", states Sam Knowles in his article "Joe Sacco's prying outsiders" (p. 45). As a result of which Carla succumbed to her ethnocentric idea of experiencing culture in Mexico. Carla comes from both colonizer and colonized backgrounds, she tries to embrace the culture and people in Mexico, but she doesn't get the same treatment as Memo's nationalistic behavior constantly reminds her that she can never be Mexican. McCloud in his book suggests that "(...) embedded in all pictures of the visible world are the seeds of the invisible" (p. 209). He hints that there are graphics which portray a certain identity but when taking a closer look, it depicts something more than on its surface. Parallel to McCloud's theory, Abel's graphic of Carla portrays a Mexican identity on the surface when she salsa dances with Oscar for the first time (Abel p.51). At first pass, Carla looks very similar to the other Mexican dancers, but on a closer examination, her identity is still uncertain. Although Carla was thrilled to have this immersed Mexican experience, the text suggests that she was mildly relieved that her and Oscar did not have to talk in Spanish. This example shows how far removed from her identity she was as she picks and chooses what it means to be Mexican. Her desire to be one of the colonized further convolutes the meaning of her existence and her purpose of visiting.

Almost every acquaintance of Carla was certain that Memo was shady in his ways and Carla's intimacy with him could lead her into trouble. Carla failed to see these signs and was very defensive of Memo when they tried to warn her. In her attempts to defending Memo, she is mainly defending herself because she thinks Memo is her identity. One example of this is when Abel shows when Carla's brother disapproves of Carla's friendship with Memo. Abel uses a "(...) picture specific combination (...)" to highlight Rod's worry about this relationship (McCloud p. 153, Abel p. 120). The graphics also state how Carla is very happy to have a friend like Memo which leads her to defy every red flag about Memo because he is giving her the identity that Carla desperately desires. Memo was an intellectual to her and successfully manages to influence Carla since she is so eager to get an understanding of her identity through Memo, despite of him bashing the government of the United States, NAFTA, and Hollywood. He even calls Carla and Sylvia representators of "the invasion of American Hollywood and imperialism of cultural and economic" (Abel, p. 27). He talks more about how bad America is, rather than talking about the struggles of the people living in his country. Carla's friends find Memo's actions to be quite radical because they are unable to see his point of view. Carla's friends come from a place designed with them in mind, which allows them to "(...) forget that their psyche and their ego are conveniently safeguarded" by their culture (Fanon p. 629). Memo's ideals contrast with his actions at times when they heard that Memo learned English so he can fool around with American women, thereby participating and taking advantage of his privilege which protects the identity he thinks he has built. Carla is afraid that without Memo's help she will have to start over in her quest, especially after giving up on Frida as her ideal, she does not want to let go of Memo as a mentor.

Carla's quest for identity allows her to establish a unique dynamic with her brother Rod. Their initial relationship was not as strong, and Carla constantly felt insecure and under



accomplished around him. It changed after Rod left for America, and became a friend to Carla, who she could confide in and share her experiences with. On the surface, however, Carla portrayed that she was devoted to the relationships she had built with Memo and Oscar. Spivak explains this as an urge to “avoid the inevitable risk of presenting herself as an authoritative representative of subaltern consciousness” in *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* by Leela Gandhi (p.2). This is where the colonizer exhibits proximity with the colonized so that they come across as more approachable and progressive. Carla does the same when she keeps her interactions with her brother a secret, as she does not want Memo to think she is still finding solace in her American roots. She pretends to be immersing in the culture and experience that Memo and Oscar have to offer and appears ecstatic about it, so she could appease them. In her heart however, she is getting more confused of who she is, especially after meeting her brother. His warm attitude towards her reminds Carla of how she was once used to being treated and she realizes that she craved this behavior. McCloud states that “when pictures carry the weight of clarity in a scene, they free words to explore a wider area” (p. 157). Abel shows this beautifully by showing the passing of time through Carla’s change in clothes and hairstyles, while at the same time the words are used to give Rod a daily update of her life. Abel shows how Carla seeks comfort from someone who comes from the same privilege so she could be understood better. Carla simultaneously maintains another aspect of her identity, so she could be agreeable in front of Memo and Oscar. She fears being bashed or ridiculed as a colonizer when she resorts to her own roots for warmth, thus reaffirming the fact that she does not know who she is.

Despite of being a local Mexican, Liana’s character too exhibits the aftermath of colonialism in her struggle to making peace with her identity. Her conservative background makes her want to quit living with her parents and place herself in an environment where she can discover herself. Edward Said, in *Postcolonialism and Feminism* stresses on the fact that

“(…) a comprehensive dismantling of colonial hierarchies and structures needs to be reformed and imaginative reconception of colonized society and culture” (p. 82). After colonization, the colonized are removed from the identity that the colonizers pushed on them, and they now have the freedom to create their own identity, which is something the colonized are not used to. In order to develop a stronger sense of what they should resonate with, they resort to an antithetical approach, where they end up doing the opposite of what their identities were conventionally a product of. Liana’s character struggles with the same, when she decides to leave her parents’ house and tries to start a life on her terms. While doing so, she still is confused by Carla’s way of life but chooses to ignore them in the name of exploration. Her main aim towards finding herself is to do the contrary of what she has been conditioned to believe in. Abel uses “word specific combinations, where pictures illustrate, but don’t significantly add to a largely complete text” (McCloud p. 153). In her graphics Abel uses sentences to describe Liana’s fascination towards Memo which is primarily a product of his radical views and unconventional lifestyle. To Liana, this is something that her family always steered clear of and in her endeavors to establishing a new image, she is drawn towards the opposite of her family values and ideals and labels it as an attraction for Memo.

Oscar’s character appears to be quite deluded with the sense of what he wants to do in his life. He follows Memo’s ideals, as he believes Memo has a power despite of being colonized and uses easy ways to make money to get to the top. Gandhi explains in her book how “it is generally acknowledged –even by the most ‘cosmopolitan’ critics –that nationalism has been an important feature of decolonization struggles in the third world” (p. 102). Post colonization, there emerged a new wave of nationalistic pride to give the colonized, a foundation of what they are. Many of them were unaware of how to define their existence in the society and hold a vital place, in order to still remain significant. Oscar’s character seems blinded by the fact that wealth and power are the primary things he needs to create a strong

personality which makes him go to extreme lengths to achieve that goal. He idealizes Memo for his comfort in his skin, as Memo continues to impart wisdom to Oscar. Oscar strives to achieve this clarity as he is continuously juggling between pride for his nation and doing what is best suited for his personal goals, which is going to America and earning fame. Like Carla, Oscar too derives his sense of identity through Memo, when he blindly believes that he will get to move to LA with Memo, in exchange of information for Harry's kidnapping (Abel, p. 232-233). He involves himself with people who want to harm a privileged American for monetary gain in the name of nationalistic pride, simultaneously conflicting with his identity as he succumbs to the temptations of the colonizers. The reader gets a sense of Carla and Oscar's "(...) senses and emotions (...)" through Abel's singular graphic representation (McCloud p. 121). Both their expressions in the scene convey how they are feeling about their life choices in the moment. Oscar looks extremely enthralled as he believes he will fly out to America with Memo and establish a more prosperous identity. He is so absorbed by that fact, that he fails to notice the power that El Gordo carries, which even Memo cannot overshadow. Abel shows how Carla notices the threat instantly through her worried facial expressions, where she lets Oscar remain in his whims of misconception.

El Gordo's character is an example of when the colonized individual uses people's lack of self and manipulates them into doing things for his benefits and profits. This is similar to when some colonized people, who were in the position of power would influence the colonized once the colonizers left. They used the system of colonialism for their own benefit and marked themselves as the true intellectuals who understood their positions in the hierarchy. They were able to take advantage of the colonized especially because the colonized's lack of identity served their purpose. El Gordo influences Oscar and Memo into the kidnapping of Harry, and not solely in the name of nationality. He promises them a part of the ransom, which could help better their lifestyles by taking wealth from a wealthy

colonizer, who was despised by all. Gandhi suggests how postcolonialism is a “way of suggesting that [the] postcolonial theory is situated somewhere in the interstices between Marxism and postmodernism/poststructuralism” (p. 167). This allows influencers to adapt the national identity of the colonized to suit their agenda, so they can maintain what they have gained, post colonization. El Gordo presents a strong identity that characters like Memo and Oscar try to mimic, to get a deeper insight of themselves. Even though El Gordo lacks physical representation in the matter, his identity is very apparent as Oscar tries ways to emulate him through stating that he is going to buy a gold-plated SUV (Abel p. 187). Oscar’s lack of personality leads him to seek identity through symbols around him that he associates with, to recognize who he wishes to be. As shown by Abel in Oscar’s character, “identities and awareness are invested in many inanimate objects every day. [These objects] can trigger numerous transformations in the way others see [them] and the way [they] see [themselves]” (McCloud p. 38). Oscar’s constant desire for wealth and fame is an imitation of El Gordo’s identity and position of power, which ultimately leads to his demise. Once Oscar is no longer deemed useful, he is murdered which is justified by removing his identity by his own people. Influencers like El Gordo, who on the surface seem authentic and original, take the prescriptive culture from the colonizer, and re-prescribe it to the people. Thus, people like El Gordo perpetuate the idea of colonialism by reinforcing its values of exploitation and through manipulation of identity for their own gain.

The end of *La Perdida* shows how the quest for identity was unending and no amount of mimicry, idealization, shunning or immersing in its culture could help the characters achieve that. Harry was violently removed from Mexico by its people after being tortured which left him damaged by the end of the novel. This is a movement similar to a revolution, where the colonized refused the identity given to them by the colonizer and sought to establish their own identity. They believe that “unlike the colonizers who possess the

privileges of citizenship and subjectivity, the colonized exist only as subjects, or as those suspended in a state of subjection” (Gandhi p. 169). This created a feeling of taking possessions from the people who were once in a place of power and claim it as the right of the colonized. Harry’s identity in his rich background was dismantled when he was treated as the colonized through torture and imprisonment. Abel uses the iconic symbol of a disheveled man to show a character who, similar to the colonized, now lacks all identity (McCloud p. 27, Abel p. 243). The fact that Abel uses a graphic novel to explain universal questions about identity and post colonialism gives the reader a medium to relate to their own identity by seeing themselves in the characters. The generic features used to represent Abel’s characters allows each reader to see the character differently based on their own understanding and experiences (McCloud p. 36). By using graphics in this way, Abel allows her readers to reflect on the dark aspects of colonization, where despite of having achieved independence, the people are still not capable of procuring an identity for themselves. The way Abel ends the book without personifying a singular character, not even the protagonist Carla, shows how the characters were humanized and bore brunt to the consequences of being colonized (Abel p. 256). When people seek to establish their existence through the methods offered by Colonialism, much like the characters in *La Perdida*, they end up losing all sense of their self, as colonialism does not have an authentic self to offer.

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## Chapter 2

### **Crippling Ramifications: A Criticism on the ‘Rich Man’s Idea’ in *Such a Lovely Little War***

*Such a Lovely Little War*, by Marcelino Truong, reveals the reality of the Vietnam war, where the readers develop a true sense of life as the colonized. The memoir focuses more on the voices of the people in Vietnam, than the American presence to provide the readers a more authentic narrative of the Vietnam war. Truong shows the dark aspects of the war and its impact on people’s lives, instead of glorifying and sensationalizing the colonizer. The memoir magnifies the atrocities the people of Vietnam faced, that were not exactly highlighted by the American-centric media, but mainly showed the American soldiers and advisors fighting and killing the enemy. They further used the enemy to describe the country and portray its people, thereby reinforcing their cause of imparting American culture as the colonizer, and as a result, Vietnam was used as a pawn to cater to the whims of the world’s conflicting political systems. It is evident that the war was much more than a ‘rich man’s idea’ (Truong p. 269) of retaining the influential role of America and the West, when it is seen through the lens of the common people and families, who are merely struggling to stay alive and protect their loved ones during the war.

The environment that Yvette experienced after moving to Vietnam, show the adversities she endured, which were a product of colonialism, a system she previously embraced and enjoyed. Truong showcases her reluctance in moving to Vietnam as she will have to sacrifice the privilege that she enjoys in America. Yvette fully understands the consequences of living as a colonized subject where she will no longer be in control of her family’s safety, or benefit from the exploitation of colonized people. Roman Rosenbaum, in his essay “Tezuka Asamu’s Postcolonial Discourse”, explains how one can be “(...) responsible for [their] actions and [their] apparent choices [which] are constrained by forces [they] do not control” (p. 69). Yvette’s position of power as a French woman, allowed her to

negate the consequences of marrying a Vietnamese man, but once she was removed from her privilege after leaving America, she found herself struggling to survive as one of the colonized. She is unable to fit in to a Vietnamese setting as she keeps demonstrating a yearning to return to her French roots. She shows her initial worry of moving to Vietnam when she writes to her parents in France and expresses her apprehension to leave (Truong p. 15). Yvette writes the letter in French, but the readers get an English translation to understand her emotions in the scene as she is holding onto her French background and is not keen to experience life as the colonized. Truong uses McCloud's additive approach by "(...) amplifying [and] elaborat[ing] on (...)" the graphic by using both the English and French languages to portray Yvette's privilege as a colonizer (McCloud p. 154). Truong shows how both these languages have been provided to Vietnam by France, their previous colonizer and America, who is trying to recolonize Vietnam, which illustrates the luxuries Yvette has enjoyed through her Western lifestyle. She is quite self-aware that she won't be able to enjoy the safety her backgrounds provide anymore, which could cause problems for her and her family during the war.

The colonizers quite often tend to ignore the problems that the colonized face, and once the colonizers leave, the colonized are left to deal with these same problems. Yvette too experiences these hardships once she moves to Vietnam and begins living a similar lifestyle as the Vietnamese people. Her initial reluctance shows the readers how she was subconsciously aware of these difficulties, when she breaks down in front of her children. (Truong p. 16-17). The author shows how Yvette cannot completely be one with the Vietnamese, since there will always be a hierarchical disparity, but this disparity cannot protect her from the environment that has been created by the exploitation of Vietnam. Albert Memmi in his book *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, explains the impact of colonization where "(...)all memory of freedom seems distant (...)" which invokes the fear of never



experiencing that emotion again (p. 92). In order to move to Vietnam, Yvette had to leave behind the power and safety her colonial status provided for her and the luxury she was able to enjoy from the spoils of colonization. Truong shows how Yvette's fears take a toll on her mental health as she continues to obsess over the dangers of living in a country that was in the process of being recolonized. Her worries are further reinforced when the family experiences an air raid near their home, which leaves her helpless and terrified. Truong uses "stylized lines" and represents this event through "single panels" and portrays "a span of time through sound" to show his mother feeling as defenseless and unprotected as the colonized (McCloud p. 110-112, Truong p. 102-103). Yvette's worries of enduring the same treatment as the Vietnamese induces a lot of anxiety which manifests into reality over the course of the novel, despite of her husband's reassurance that their status will protect them from the dangers of the war.

The colonizer often, at their time of convenience, have elevated colonial intellectuals to a better position of power, but have still maintained a hierarchical standard where the 'intellectual' would be considered dispensable. Given their new position, the intellectual now feels pressured to conform to the standards of the colonizer in which they go to extreme lengths to achieve this. Fanon describes this to be a result of "(...) the colonized intellectual ha[ving] thrown himself headlong into Western culture" (p. 633). This position of power might look more appealing to the Vietnamese people as it promises more privilege, but it still requires them to replicate Western behavior and way of life to remain relevant. Truong's father exemplifies this theory when he wakes up at 5:45 in the morning and goes to work in a Tussah suit to set an example as to what a Western "(...) civil servant (...)" looks like (Truong p. 129,131). His dedication towards his work shows how, despite being in a better position than most Vietnamese people, he is still expected to serve the needs of his superior. He understands the levels of power that his position in the society carries, which persuades

him to make a good impression, so he can set a good example for other colonials and retain the privilege this position offers. Truong identifies the suit as an icon that “(...) represent[s] (...) [the] idea” of colonization and serves as a constant reminder that he is a subordinate to the colonizer (McCloud p.27). Marco’s father finds it essential to copy the Western ways, because he is accepting his role as an influencer to impart Western culture. Even though he has this privilege, he still must make the same choices as his fellow Vietnamese people, between providing for his family and keeping them safe. The only reason he is more privileged over other Vietnamese people is because he is useful to the government and their relationship with the Americans. It might seem that he has the capacity to keep his family safe, but if he falls short of fulfilling his expectations as an interpreter, he would be stripped of his intellectual status, thus jeopardizing his family’s safety during the war.

Colonialism, which used a top-down view of the colonial world, offered protection for the colonizer from viewing the atrocities of colonization, and removed them from dealing with the devastating effects it had on the individual families. In *Such a Lovely Little War*, Truong shows how his family was forced to cope differently and how both of his elder siblings, exhibited behaviors that mirrored the stereotypical discrepancy between boys and girls to confide in the Westernized definition of expected gender roles, which helped comfort them while they experienced the war. Truong’s father understands that colonial life in Vietnam has taken toll on his wife, but he lacks the resources to provide her an alternative (Truong p.136). Both parents fall short in being present in the lives of their children which leaves their kids to make meaning of the world, based on their experiences in the United States and Vietnam. Truong demonstrates this shortcoming through a “(...) scene-to-scene transition (...)” by which the readers witness the kids portraying the generic understanding of their respective roles since their mother has mentally checked out (McCloud p. 71, Truong p. 82-83). These graphic frames show how Truong’s siblings are influenced by the narrative of

the American agenda by identifying the Viet-Cong as their enemy. They further reinforce their masculine and feminine roles which are again a result of American influence, and since they suffer from an inadequacy in parental influence, the Western idea is the only thing they could turn to. Familial conflicts like such, were hardly acknowledged by the colonizer, as they mainly focused on the aspects of the war that fit their glorified cause.

Imitation offered the colonized, a way to grapple with the power imbalance that the colonizers have established, through colonial hierarchy. This mimicry serves the purpose of gaining a sense of self that has control over some aspects of their life by creating power disparities of their own. Marco's character too, mimes the treatment of the Americans towards the Vietnamese people, where he innocently replicates these behaviors as a way to explore the treatment he has experienced. He exhibits his dominance over his pet crickets where he forces them to fight, as he emulates the powerful colonizer where its colonial subjects are exploited in a similar way (Truong p. 83). Marco's limited understanding of what his position in colonial society was, made him want to imitate the colonizer to give him a way to better understand what was going on around him. His desire to "(...) emerge as 'authentic' through mimicry (...)" lets him to believe that the rich man's idea of the war was an idea of his own reality as well (Bhabha p. 671). The colonizer offers a generic concept of their agenda, which obscures their real motives from the colonized, and allows the colonized individual to see a part themselves resonating with the colonizer by elevating their position of power. Marco tries to feel a sense of power over his house help Chi Hai when he grabs her boob to establish dominance on someone less privileged than himself. He is able to explore his position in the social hierarchy, where Chi Hai is responsible to take care of him in order to support her own family. Truong uses cartoonist graphics to explain how colonialism has left Marco yearning to experience life "(...) in another realm" where he explores a power hierarchy in his own way (McCloud p. 36, Truong p. 146-147). Since Marco's family has the

resources to employ underprivileged Vietnamese people, Marco too, was able to get away without any major consequences, by abusing his access to power for his advantage, much like the colonizer.

Despite of identifying as the colonized, the colonized individual still finds itself heavily influenced by the culture and political views of the colonizer. In order to gather a perfect sense of their own political and cultural opinions, once the colonizers have left, the colonized find themselves still gravitating towards the beliefs that were once imparted by the colonizer. Fanon thoroughly describes this phenomenon when “(...) the actions of the colonized intellectual do much to support and justify the actions of the politicians” (p. 633). The prescribed political and cultural views given to the colonized are so deeply rooted in their identity, that years post-colonialization, the colonized are still influenced by the colonizers. Marco imitated the Americans as a child, but still held onto his views which were influenced by his Western background, even as an adult. While Marco expresses his criticisms of the American strategy in Vietnam, he fails to realize that he is further reinforcing their colonial strategy of convincing the Vietnamese that this was their war to fight when he states, “we should have done it on our own, with American weapons, but without their soldiers, the way the communists did (...)” (Truong p. 270). Marco believes he now knows about the shortcomings of South Vietnam and proposes alternatives by which they could have won against the north. He unknowingly suggests the same agenda of his American subjugators as a result of his colonized upbringing by proposing that the South Vietnamese people should have shown more passion as it was their war to fight. The end of the book shows how Marco is struggling to understand his own opinions of the war which clash with his father’s involvement in the conflict. Truong uses “(...) parallel combinations, [where] words and pictures seem to follow very different courses (...)” where despite of noting his father’s experience through graphics, he refutes his father’s account of the war

through dialogue (McCloud p. 154, Truong p. 269). He unknowingly continues to act like the Americans who have an idea of what they want the war to look like and provide solutions from a distance. His condemnation of a “rich man’s war” was instilled with the American idea about the conflict, which made a lasting impact on Marco’s impression about the war.

The power disparities between the colonial powers and the colonized, allows the colonizer to see their subjects as a resource to be expended which leads to the suppression and the helpless colonial subject. Through Chu Ba’s example, the author demonstrates how due to his position in society, Chu Ba lacks the freedom to choose his own fate, and gets drafted, leaving his six children and wife behind (Truong p. 224). Chu Ba and his family feel the full disenfranchisement of American subjugation when he has no right to appeal when he is drafted and is forced into service despite his plea for exemption. Said explains how the colonizer continues to suppress the colonized “(...) by developing a justificatory regime of self-aggrandizing, self-originating authority interposed between the victim of imperialism and its perpetrator” (p. 724). They justify this oppression by declaring it as an act of service, while at the same time, they neglect the suffering of the families who are directly affected by the war. The colonizer overlooks the struggles of the common man, when they propagate a notion that they are helping the colonized in supporting their cause for freedom, but their actions exploit the colonized, in an effort to further distance themselves from the lack of colonial privation. The Vietnamese families suffer most from the dehumanization of the family, as they must strike a balance between the narrative of the Americans and their own understanding of the war, while providing for their own needs. Truong humanizes Chu Ba and his family with his selective use of colored graphics, so the reader becomes “(...) more aware of [their] physical form (...) than in black and white” (McCloud p. 189, Truong p. 220-221). In this graphic, Truong shows the essence of Chu Ba’s family in its true sense, where his roles as a father and husband are highlighted in contrast to a reduced status as an

American subject, who was expected to leave his family behind and serve the American's cause during the war.

Colonialism reinforces the implementation of a singular idea and fears the establishment of other belief systems as they could challenge their dominance over the minds of the colonized. The strong American influence on South Vietnamese soldiers encouraged them into considering every other group, such as the Viet-Cong who did not have the same views at them, as their enemy. Matthew Killmeier, in his article, "A People's History of Empire, or the Imperial Recuperation of Vietnam? Countermyths and Myths in Heaven and Earth" states that "the key representation of Vietnamese, the enemy, in particular Vietcong guerrillas, are often symbolically represented as "the psychic other" that challenges the "American myth of heroic masculinity (...)" (p. 258-259). This masculinity creates a sense of elitism where the colonized suppress and torture people that are further down the hierarchical ladder, which helps perpetuate the notion that all colonized are the enemy. The masculine ideology makes the act of aggressive conversion permissible for those in power that was provided by the colonizer in exchange of this service. Those lacking power must accept this fate or face extermination. Truong shows this when the South Vietnamese soldier brags that he has " (...) [a] former Viet-Cong among [his] men" indicating how this power gives him the authority to remove any other belief other than their singular idea (Truong p. 97). The extremeness of this conversion can be seen in Truong's graphics where he uses "(...) action-to-action progressions" to show the final moments of a suspected Viet-Cong member (McCloud p.70, Truong p.96-97). The soldier's actions are justified due to the man's suspected affiliation with the Viet-Cong where he does not accept the Americans' impressed idea and tries to resist the torture of the soldiers, which leads to his demise.

During the Vietnam war, the American government recognized the importance of convincing the South Vietnamese that it was the war of the common man and through this

participation reduced the people's identities to being just another pawn in a global conflict. Under the pretense of promoting democracy, Kennedy hoped to secure American influence over the people of South Vietnam through his relationship with President Diem, and in an attempt to further instill the idea that this was a genuine Vietnamese conflict. Fanon sates how the political parties are most often "interested in getting the people who are listening to understand that they must join in the struggle if they want quite simply to exist" (Fanon p. 628). The colonizers thus frame the conflict in a way that the people feel it is their moral obligation to be part of it if they want to survive. Kennedy strived to indirectly influence the common people of South Vietnam, where he used a strategy to remove himself from the message and delegate through Diem. Kennedy's message conflicts with the actions of the American soldiers where they kill innocent people in the name of entertainment, which contradict his illusion of providing safety to the common man during war. Truong displays this through the graphics with "(...) variations [in] lettering styles (...)" which show the eagerness of "(...) Kennedy's boys (...)" to participate in a rich man's war as they shoot a Vietnamese man running to save his life (Truong p. 89-90, McCloud p. 134). This explains how the intent of Kennedy to participate in the war was flawed, as it led to the loss of lives of many innocent people in South Vietnam.

Once Kennedy realized that this was not a rich man's war, he recognized the urgency to withdraw American support before the war started to demand more resources from them than South Vietnam could provide. As their relationships deteriorated, the maintenance of Vietnam as a colony became impossible without sacrificing American lives. When America failed to colonize South Vietnam, Kennedy was still able to use his power and remove his people from the impact of war. He exhibits the classic behavior of the colonizer who after exploiting the colonized, can move on without any consequences. In the novel, Truong mentions how Kennedy calls South Vietnam a "(...) swamp" and is no longer concerned

with supporting the people of Vietnam, but rather makes it a priority to “(...) bring back [his] boys” (p. 257). The Americans who had the ability to colonize, also had the privilege to unravel their colonial holding, leaving South Vietnam to bear the brunt of the aftermath of exploitation. Kennedy’s emotion can be seen through graphics when Truong uses “(...) a picture [that] evoke[ed] an emotional (...) response in the viewer (...)” (Truong p. 257, McCloud p. 121). The graphic shows Kennedy’s concern for his American soldiers when he realizes that the war is far removed from being glorified as he had expected it to be. Unlike the Vietnamese, he has the luxury to move to a safer place and retract his people from the harmful effects of the war, while the Vietnamese are left to deal with the consequences that were created by the colonizer.

President Diem’s intentions, which he claimed were for the well-being of his people, are more sinister than they seem, as his real motive appears to keep his position of power as the President of South Vietnam. He promotes Catholicism in an attempt to resonate with the West, so he could retain his political status leading him to expend lives and invite a colonial power to reinforce his position, so he can continue to benefit from the exploitation of his own people. Chris Kortright, in his article “Colonization and Identity”, defines how the “features of the colonial situation include political and legal domination over the “other” society, (...)” where Diem forfeits South Vietnam’s legal and political integrity by accepting American influence (p.4). President Diem understands the importance of his position and he fears losing it to the communist government during election. He tries to help Kennedy establish political dominance over the people of South Vietnam in the name of helping them achieve freedom, and at the same time is helping America recolonize South Vietnam, so he could enjoy his benefits as the President, a position he had to fight for in the past. Truong uses “color [to] sensation[alize] (...) Diem’s “support of the most powerful Western nation (...) when he renames the memorial after Kennedy to appropriate the political consciousness of South



Vietnam to a more American centric view (Truong p. 140-141, McCloud p. 191). Despite his claims of serving the people of South Vietnam during the war, Diem is willing to overlook the adversities the war created for Vietnamese families due to American policy, in exchange for maintaining his position as a leader in South Vietnam.

America participated in the war with an ambition to further glorify its heroic actions of rescuing South Vietnam, which contradicted the news articles published by the American journalists, as it showed how the American policy was failing in Vietnam. The print media exposed America to the real situation of the war, where the soldiers were struggling to fight against Viet-Cong and North Vietnam, thereby creating a discomfort amongst the American colonizers who expected this to be a straightforward victory. Kortright states that “(...) historical situations are created by people (...)” during colonization, and further emphasizes that it is important to recognize that “(...) people are in turn created by these situations” (p. 6). If people participating in these historical situations do not document the facts in an authentic way, it could otherwise be lost in the event of sensationalizing the story of the victor. The journalists provided the American public with an independent voice which undermined “(...) the triumphant tone of the high command (...)” but instead showed “(...) a more pessimistic picture of the conflict (...)” (Truong p. 196). The print media conflicted with America’s idea of the war and through these publications, transcended the frustrations of American advisors in Vietnam. Truong uses McCloud’s “(...) Scene-to-Scene transitions (...)” to demonstrate the ramifications of the interview given by an American advisor stating the realities of the war, which are damaging to Kennedy’s administration (Truong p. 195-196, McCloud p. 71). The journalists provide the American public with evidence that this is no longer a conflict for glory and liberation but one that is trying to redefine South Vietnam as a nation.

The Viet-Cong represented the common people of Vietnam who, despite of difference in political views, had a common cause of resisting colonization. Their revolt showed how the country was not essentially divided into a communist and democratic government as portrayed by the American government in Saigon, as these groups reflected the desire of the people of Vietnam to choose their own fate rather than submit to another colonial power. Fanon writes how in order to destroy colonialism one needs to “(...) authorize every revolt, every desperate act, and every attack aborted or drowned in blood” (p. 628). The determination to remove American influence served as a driving force for people as they took radical actions to reclaim Vietnamese sovereignty. After successfully removing the French from Vietnam, the Viet Cong resumed their anticolonial campaign against the new colonizer, the American supported regime in South Vietnam. Truong shows how the Viet Cong was villainized by Americans as a communist terrorist group, however “(...) not all [Viet Cong] were communists” but rather “(...) were simply fervent patriots who fought and died by the tens of thousands” (p. 44). The Americans, in an effort to justify their behavior against the Viet Cong, identified them as a threat to the South Vietnamese democracy, by focusing on their violent actions. Truong uses McCloud’s “universal configuration” in his graphic where he depicts the Viet Cong as common people rather than a radical organization who are motivated to fight against the colonial power for their freedom (Truong p. 44, McCloud p. 46). This rebellion was a result of the common people’s fear of being recolonized and losing their lives to endorse the American idea of the purpose of the war.

The end of the novel shows the aftermath of the war, where under communism the people of Vietnam struggled with poverty and political corruption. The people of Vietnam lost many lives under the influence of America who promised them a better and independent future. In an effort to regain their independence, they were forced to participate in a war that dismantled the lives of countless Vietnamese people. *Such a Lovely Little War* shows the

impact of war on common people and highlights the loopholes in the political ideology which have an adverse effect on those who are directly exposed to them. Despite their sacrifices the average people of Vietnam were left with “privileges for a small number of apparatchiks and poverty for everyone else” (Truong p. 267). Marco’s family was able to escape the consequences of the war due to their social status in Vietnam, while families like Chu Ba’s were left to suffer the repercussions of the war. Truong uses color at the end of the novel which plays a “(...) central role” in showing the bleak existence of the Vietnamese after the war, in contrast with the bright future of Marco and his family in France (Truong p. 266-267, 270-271, McCloud p. 190). Both America and USSR competed to influence Vietnam into believing in their political ideology which pitted the people of Vietnam against each other. Vietnamese lives and families were disregarded as the agenda of both colonial powers were pushed further to maintain their respective ideas of a rich man’s war.

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### Chapter 3

#### **Narrative Compilation: A Study of Colonial Exploitation Through a Collection of Stories in *Rolling Blackouts***

*Rolling Blackouts*, a graphic memoir by Sarah Glidden, documents the impact of political, economic, and cultural adversities on families affected due to conflicts developed by colonial powers. Glidden introduces “Rolling Blackouts” as a term that conveys to her readers the plight of the refugees in Syria, Turkey, and Iraq who have been displaced as a result of American involvement in the region. Glidden’s memoir aspires to maintain the original voice of the refugees they interview through the medium of authentic reporting by conducting face to face interviews. Traditional journalism often seeks to tell the story from one perspective, but by using a series of multiple interviews and experiences, Glidden creates an anthology which attempts to humanize refugees by providing them with opportunities to share their unadulterated stories. Glidden uses “Rolling Blackouts” as a metaphor to highlight how a “Rolling Blackouts” mentality allows the colonial power to distance themselves from accepting responsibility which enables a selective awareness to the issues they have created for the colonized during their exploitation. Her organization of her novel causes a shift in perspective in these stories, which ultimately causes a shift in narrative, thus exposing the “Rolling Blackouts” for what they really are, a continuous colonial exploitation of the colonized.

The colonizer, who uses a Rolling Blackouts mentality, chooses to justify their actions through the elevated status of a few, rather than take responsibility for the detriment of the colonized majority. In the novel, Glidden shows Ibrahim’s faith in the American Government as a self-serving perspective when he expresses his gratitude towards the American promise of personal freedom and independence. As his interview continues, it is evident that Ibrahim’s narrative is constructed based on his selective understanding of the impact of America in Iraq as he states, “If you have Arab come to Kurdistan, they make problems like

Baghdad or Fallujah” (Glidden, p. 84). Ibrahim chooses to overlook how the American presence in Baghdad and Fallujah displayed the idea of a Rolling Blackout mentality, where the American government moved from one city to another, suggesting that they had solutions and took it upon themselves to liberate the Iraqi people by ousting Saddam’s anti Kurdish regime and installing a Western democracy in its place. This led to the destruction of a sizable number of innocent lives, an important detail missing from Ibrahim’s narrative. Glidden uses Ibrahim’s character, who on his own does not have much impact on the situation in Iraq, but, when used as an “icon”, allows the American narrative to justify its actions on the basis of his limited understanding of the conflict and personal biases (McCloud p. 59). Glidden uses Ibrahim’s pro American point of view to demonstrate if this were viewed as the only story of the Iraqi people, it could reinforce the hierarchy created by the American government and their purpose of involvement in Iraq, rather than give a representative voice to the people of Iraq.

Glidden uses Dan’s example to show how colonists constantly remind their colonial subjects of the legitimacy of their involvement in their colonies. Dan’s repeated attempts to impress Ibrahim by talking about his time in the American military shows how desperate he was to be venerated as well as his constant need for validation, so he could reaffirm what he believed in- “that this fight was worth fighting for” (Glidden p. 88). He, like Ibrahim, selectively holds the American military in high regard and seeks to be seen as a hero in the same way the American army was portrayed in Iraq, as liberators. Glidden uses Dan’s cartoons (McCloud p. 36) to link the readers strongly to his image which exhibits selective awareness of the American agenda. The cartoons depict Dan mimicking the actions of the colonizer who consistently seek praise for their subjectively good deeds, while ignoring the objective damage they have caused for the people of Iraq, so they can continue to superimpose this ‘Rolling blackout’ mentality. Fanon states how “national culture under

colonial domination is a culture under interrogation whose destruction is sought systematically” (Fanon p. 640). The colonial superpower believes that if the colonial subject idolizes the colonial supremacy, they will subjugate themselves to the exploitation of their own culture and immerse in the colonized lifestyle. Albert Memmi, in his book *The Colonizer and the Colonized* explains how a colonialist “(...) asserts his cultural superiority – virtues such as heroism – and makes a show of his culture in order to impress the colonized” Dan tries to emulate this during his interaction with Ibrahim and Glidden highlights this keenness in his eyes when he tells Ibrahim that he was in the American army and desperately tries to sell him the positive impact of American Government in Iraq.

The colonial subject struggles to re-establish their full identity since it has been tampered throughout colonization and cannot be redeemed under the victim-enemy binary of the colonial regime. In Robert Young’s book, *Postcolonialism: an historical introduction*, he states “ (...) that the binary opposition between colonizer and colonized is not so easily reversed; the entire power structure of colonialism itself stands in the way of such an improbable exchange” (p. 101). He explains how this system of disparity is engineered to maintain the supremacy of the colonizer over the colonized and continue to emulate a prescriptive approach of assigning binaries. This hierarchy is best explained in *Rolling Blackouts* when Sam mentions how the American soldiers “are in the market without their weapons. And the people, they are throwing flowers on them” (Glidden p. 114). Glidden uses Sam’s character as an attempt to isolate his situation that is powerless after being deported and labelled as a terrorist, which now dictates his life. She uses “parallel combinations” where “(...) words and pictures seem to follow very different courses—without intersecting” (McCloud p. 154) to remove Sam from his guilty reputation of being a potential terrorist by giving the reader another perspective of his being. While the text described the ICE’s interrogation of Sam, the graphics show how non-threatening his appearance was, like any

other ordinary man who was separated from his wife and kids. Glidden shows how Sam's estrangement between his American and Iraqi identities makes it impossible for him to embrace the other part of himself that is not a suspect in the 9/11 commission report. This helplessness results in Sam's deluded contentment with his situation, as he forgives the American government for their behavior, which further reinstalls the system of exploitation in place.

The colonial hierarchy often tempts the colonized with false hopes of freedom, liberation and resettlement which creates an atmosphere of false inclusion, by perpetuating the idea that they will get closer to living the colonizer's lifestyle, leaving them susceptible to being exploited again. Despite being deported for ambiguous reasons, Sam still shares an admiration for the United States when he downplays his struggles and pain to exclaim how his daughter can graduate from the University of Washington (Glidden p. 163). He holds on to the gratitude he feels from when his family was first approved for resettlement in the United States, which was his definition of a beautiful life. Zahra Sadeghi, in her article "Role of Colonial Subjects in Making Themselves Inferior in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*" reflects on " (...) the ideologies that forced the colonized people to feel inferior in front of the colonizer's superiority (p. 49). These ideologies mitigate the significance of the colonial subject's own cultural icons, while reinforcing the dominance of the colonizer which allows the colonized to accept the notion of universal inferiority. Glidden tells a much larger story which gives depth to Sam's struggles by applying McCloud's "additive art of comics" (McCloud p. 85) within a few frames, where each frame allows the reader to make sense of a deeper meaning while looking through these graphics. The readers can witness the impact of years of colonial subjugation through the superiority that Sam associates with the colonizer's cultural icons like Starbucks or honey buns as superior to his own (Glidden p. 147). He



voluntarily immerses himself in inconsequential relishes, to coat the pain he feels from being separated from his family and continues to submit himself to the colonial power.

The colonizer's involvement is glorified through orchestrated narratives that revolve around a narrative of their choice where the colonizer focuses more on what they have accomplished rather than acknowledging the innocent lives that were destroyed in the process. Despite of this, the colonizer attempts to subdue the colonized and convince them that the colonial model is in their best interest by fabricating a narrative for the colonized as they recognize their importance in the colonial system. Memmi explains the importance of their role as "the colonialist realizes that without the colonized, the colony would no longer have any meaning (Memmi p. 66). In *Rolling Blackouts*, Glidden and her team encounter helpless families, who share their struggles of being stuck in deserted Saddam-era army barracks, while awaiting government assistance. Glidden shows how their stories are important in history as it would challenge the colonial narrative of a society that the colonized "(...) are conditioned that their inadequacy is what makes them unable to 'assume' a role in history" (Memmi, p.94). The American Government focused on the current situation in Iraq which was a result of their invasion and chose to overlook the fact that the people had decent lives before their involvement. Glidden uses Dayan Aziz's interview as a medium to show how in the midst the war, these individual narratives are never highlighted, where "stories like these are some of the facets of Iraq that the West never hears about, stories just as important as the car bombs and the battles between insurgents and American troops" (Glidden p.172-176). Glidden uses "color" as "environment" (McCloud p. 91) to show the desolate condition the people were in now, as compared to a much better life before they left Kirkuk. Dayan's desperation is evident through her expressions where she finds the need to be heard so her family might be able to access some help that could better their situation. These narratives go deeper than war and conflict, its consequences led to the displacement of

people who were simply trying to survive but were instead stripped off their own culture and ideology.

Despite witnessing the exploitation of people in Turkey, Syria and Iraq, Dan's video blog was surprisingly narrow and American centric where he acts like a colonizer in order to make sense of what his role was in the military. In *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, "Memmi assigns the term 'colonialist' to the colonizer who agrees to be a colonizer. He will defend his role and absolve himself by demonstrating the merits of his culture and the faults of the native's culture" (p. 52). The colonialist reveres its role as a right-hand person in freeing the colonized from torment and oppression and diminishes the torture they experienced in this idiosyncrasy. Dan too, in his documentary reduces the impact of war to his personal adventures and uses selective information to applaud his contribution in the military. Glidden shows how Dan mentions that "they're (people of Iraq) safe once and for all from the menace of Saddam" (Glidden p. 194) but he conveniently leaves out the part where this invasion led to the destruction of once, beautiful, and safe cities like Bagdad and Fallujah. Glidden uses "aspect to aspect transition" to describe Dan's documentary where he appropriates the good moments and the relationships, he built to show the positive side of war (Glidden p. 192-194, McCloud p.72). He uses rare images of children playing in the park as a metaphor for "the seeds of democracy" that was possible only because the American government toppled Saddam's regime. Even though he had multiple chances of questioning this ideology, Dan chooses to stick to his limited understanding and creates his narrative, which if read by itself could mislead people into believing that America was merely trying to help and the present situation in Iraq was an outcome of their own drawbacks.

Dan's lack of guilt can further be witnessed during one of his interviews with Sarah where he makes one section of the truth into its entirety, like "the little segment of war from March 2007 to October 2007" (Glidden p. 204) and excuses himself of any lingering

allegations. Arthur Webb, in his article “Ideological arrogance does not justify colonization in Iraq”, defines the purpose of American involvement in Iraq as an attempt to impose “western ideologies on people who don't subscribe to those ideologies”. This discrepancy is crucial for the colonizers to continue exploiting the colonized under the name of imparting culture.

Dan's guilt doesn't necessarily extend to what happened to the Iraqi population or the people that were killed by his unit, but he deeply mourned Sergeant Nichols condition which shows how he participated in this colonial paradigm that places the importance of colonialist lives over the colonized. Dan's partial understanding of the war hinders his ability to see that America failed to establish a strong government after America removed Saddam Hussein from power. Instead, he demonstrates the glorification of America's role in the Middle East, by taking pride in his contribution to the American military and chooses to overlook the consequences of their involvement, and the suffering of the people. Glidden uses the colors in the graphics “to express a dominant mood” (McCloud p. 190, Glidden p. 202-206) where Dan is more candid in the dark about his feelings, in contrast to being more conscious of his speech in the light. This is identical to the ‘Rolling Blackouts’ mentality and reflects on how many live in this ignorant darkness and refuse to absorb information that could contradict their dignified beliefs. This self-justification liberates the colonizer from feeling responsible for the colonized, which allows them to continue enforcing their colonial ideology, that maintains their status and privileges.

Colonization is often introduced as an assistance for those who are incapable of governing themselves, and the colonizer's decision overshadows the choice of the colonized in the matter. Memmi explains how “colonization usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility” (p. 91). The colonizer removes the voices of the colonized by dehumanizing them under their colonial ideologies and assumes that their involvement will be venerated

and exalted by the colonized as acts of heroism. In *Rolling Blackouts*, Glidden shows a scene from the UNHCR center in Douma, where families who once lived comfortable lives were now forced to seek refuge in unknown places after the American government invaded Iraq, waiting for their bimonthly rations. Sarah's interview with an Iraqi woman in the center highlights the destruction caused under the pretext of removing Saddam, where she cannot move back to her own country because it is not safe. The Iraqi woman blames the American government for her situation and expresses her disdain when she says, "your army came to [my] country [and] this is why it happened" (Glidden p. 288). Glidden uses McCloud's "picture specific combinations" where she uses words from Arabic to add "a soundtrack to a visually told sequence" (McCloud p. 153). She uses the Iraqi woman's expressions in the picture to describe her feelings of anger and resentment as a helpless refugee and uses text from her first language to accentuate that emotion. Her pain and anger are a result of colonial oppression that uprooted her family from Iraq, leaving her to seek asylum in any place that would accept her. Glidden uses the woman's example to help readers understand that people did not really benefit from the American involvement, like it is so often portrayed but it rather degraded their identities from being respectable citizens to displaced refugees.

The colonial narrative uses the elevated position of one colonial subject and conveniently disregards the misfortune of thousands of colonized people that further perpetuates their agenda of exploitation. The colonizer chooses to focus on events that dignify their involvement and propagates this selective information through media. This lack of information then creates a selective awareness that distances masses from understanding the realities of colonial oppression, and so they continue to believe in the colonial ideology. Glidden challenges this system by providing the readers with a collection of interviews that emphasize colonial subjugation rather than engineered narratives that encourage colonial practices. Glidden introduces various characters whose individual experiences are incapable

of challenging the colonial ideology on their own, but when they are arranged together to create a larger narrative, contradict the “Rolling Blackouts” mentality that colonialism employs to subdue its subjects. She demonstrates this in the beginning of her graphic novel when she depicts an Iraqi woman in greater detail and with vivid colors as compared to her depiction at the end of the book where she is shown more generically. This scene, which is arranged out of context in the story, makes it difficult for the readers to understand her point of view as they are “(...) far too aware of the messenger to fully receive the message” (McCloud p. 37). Glidden shows how once the woman’s story is given context, and when cartoons are used for the character’s appearance, the readers are able to “(...) see [themselves]” (McCloud p. 36). The initial scene in *Rolling Blackouts* is a personification of Glidden’s critique of a “Rolling Blackouts” mentality, where context is artificially created or removed to reinforce a system of oppression that contributes to the colonizer-colonized binary that continues to subjugate the colonized in the negotiation of power in the colonial hierarchy.

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## Chapter 4

### **Domestic Colonization: A Campaign for New India in *Delhi Calm***

Vishwajyoti Ghosh, in his graphic novel *Delhi Calm*, demonstrates how the nationwide “Emergency” imposed by the Prime Minister of India in 1975 adversely affected the country’s population, that originally intended to elevate the people and give the nation a new identity. The purpose of this “Emergency” was to control “(...) ‘internal disturbance’, for which the constitutional rights were suspended, and freedom of speech and the press [were] withdrawn” (Roychowdhury), an approach that was quite similar to the colonial practices that the country had witnessed before independence. The author details the methods of suppression that the people of the country faced during the “Emergency” and tries to show the readers the similarities between enforcing the “Emergency” and the colonial regime. The graphics in the novel play a significant role in depicting the brutality and the helplessness of the common man where he suffers from colonial oppression from his own government. Ghosh explains how this affects the average person’s identity whose independence is once again threatened, and under the pretext of westernization and urban democracy, experiences subjugation by a higher authority. He further shows how this “Emergency” claimed to elevate the underprivileged people by promising a rapid economic growth, but the graphics show how the situation of the people deteriorated, as they lost their basic rights and were mercilessly beaten up by the police. The graphic novel reflects on how the government of India used colonial practices to implement this “Emergency”, with an assumption that the people would believe it was natural, in the process of giving the nation a new identity.

‘The “Smiling Saviours” (the Youth Congress) , a group that endorsed this “Emergency” on behalf of the government, termed the “Emergency” as progressive and beneficial, and completely disregarded the issues that the people faced during this “Emergency”. The saviours tried to convince people through the promises of a new nation by

offering development in 20 points, or by providing assistance when they state, “ From now on, we will be around the corner for any help you need. Keep smiling and stay disciplined” (Ghosh, p. 13). Ghosh highlights how this confuses the masses as these saviours are implementing the rules of the “Emergency” in the name of support while expecting the people to be happy about the newly imposed lack of freedom, as an act of discipline. Eileen L. Zurbriggen, in her article “Objectification, Self-Objectification, and Societal Change” explains how the colonizers often describe the “(...) colonized peoples as sub-human, as wild savages who need to be tamed or suppressed, or guided, educated, and protected from their own folly or ignorance” (p. 193). This understanding of the colonized being inadequate leads to the need of imparting structure and discipline to give the people and its colony a refined identity. Under the guidance of the government, the saviours make the “Emergency” sound better through motivational rallies that promise a new India, expecting people to abide by these new laws for a better nation. Ghosh uses McCloud’s “picture specific combinations where words do a little more than add a soundtrack to a visually told sequence” to bring attention to the struggle of an everyday working man amidst the “Emergency” (McCloud p. 153). While he uses the graphic of footsteps, the text reads, “Forget about the censorship. What happens to our salaries, behnch...” (Ghosh p. 11), which shows how people were more concerned about survival then worry about the new nation policies. The “Smiling Saviours” neglected these factors of unemployment and oppression as they continued to propagate the measures for “New India” (Ghosh p. 125).

The “Smiling Saviours”, in their pursuit of change and discipline, took some extreme measures during the “Emergency” and sterilized men and women against their will to control birth rate. In this process, the saviours lost sight of their consciences as they embraced this power over the masses and found sadistic pleasure in acting on the new regulations implemented by the government. The “Emergency” “(...) deliberately created the ordeal as



an opportunity for the nation to learn the right lessons...” (Ghosh p. 165) and presumed that the country will voluntarily stand for every measure, as it is the duty of the citizens to listen to its government, who is promising them a new identity. Zurbriggen mentions how “The tolerance of oppression by the colonizing group has sometimes led even further to what Rimonte (1997) referred to as colonial debt—the debt that the colonized owe to the colonizers for having been saved, civilized, and lifted up from the “natural” state of primitive savagery” (p. 193). The colonized feel obliged to respect the colonizer’s verdict, as they provide an assurance of a better culture and way of life. The concept of sterilization, though introduced as something that the people could get at their own will in order to bring the population of the nation under control, was used as a vehicle to invoke fear in the citizens so they would continue to obey the commands of ‘the “Smiling Saviours”. Ghosh uses atrocious graphics to explain how the saviours exploited their authority, as they try to meet their target of 50,000 sterilizations set by the government. He uses McCloud’s theory of time frames “when the content of a silent panel offers no clues as to its duration, it [produces] a sense of timelessness, [and] because of its unresolved nature, such a panel may linger in the reader’s mind” ( McCloud p. 102). Ghosh uses panels of people being castrated one after the other, which elicits the reader to wonder if the “Emergency” was in fact for the betterment of the people. Following these panels, are the panels of the saviours responsible for this deed, who show no remorse in hurting their own people, as they are convinced this is needed in order to ensure the growth and development of their nation. Ghosh shows how these sterilizations symbolize the people ceding their power and potency by letting the nation’s regulations define their existence.

The “Emergency” created a colonial regime by establishing policies that treated the common man as a sub-citizen in comparison to officers of the law and the government, which made dehumanizing acts towards these people justifiable. In order to establish structure and

discipline in the nation, the government provided the police “ (...) with unprecedented powers under MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) whereby they [could] arrest without warrant and detain without trial for any reason” in an effort to suppress the people disobeying the law (Ghosh p. 167). Ghosh shows how the police took undue advantage of this power to torture the people for even the slightest reason, so they could use fear as a vehicle to maintain the new regulations of the “Emergency”. Mathieu Deflem, in “The Politics of Policing : Between Force and Legitimacy” explains how “The colonial design of the Indian police was to subjugate the people and serve as an instrument to control the vast lands and the diverse people at an economic cost” (p. 124). This helped reinforce the hierarchy which kept the colonizers in power as they continued to exercise their authority through forms of police brutality that defined the colonized subject’s identity of being powerless. The “Emergency” followed a similar colonial pattern when it encouraged the police officers to monitor the actions of the people at all costs, so the government could continue to publicize its agenda. Ghosh uses compelling graphics to describe the torment of the masses, when he uses multiple panels on a single page, each containing incidents of the outrageous conduct of policemen on innocent citizens (Ghosh p. 166-167). He uses McCloud’s theory on time frames where “(...) the content of a silent panel offers no clue to its duration (...) [and] because of its unresolved nature, such [panels] linger in the reader’s mind” (McCloud p. 102), to emphasize on these individual stories of police violence, who could get away with it because of MISA. The government failed to anticipate these consequences of implementing this law by providing policemen with this authority and how it could disrupt the person’s relationship with his countrymen and his safety.

Ghosh describes the vulnerability of the average citizen during the “Emergency” where freedom of speech was dismissed as a contribution to a young nation’s “progressive, socialist identity” (Ghosh p. 45). The author uses ‘keep quiet masks’ as a metaphor of how

the people were forbidden from discussing politics, or any other sensitive topic like the “Emergency”, riots, protests, unless it was to praise the government. This lack of voice was then used as acceptance to the government’s agenda of controlling the nation by silencing the voices of the citizens. Rahul Mitra, in his article, “Organizational Colonization and silencing in the Indian Media with the Launch of the World’s Cheapest Car” explains how colonization operates not just through institutional sources of power, but also through the spread/reinforcement of ideology (p. 574). By advocating the ideas of reinvention of a colony or by persuading masses on the need of a better culture, colonization continues to maintain its existence in the society. In *Delhi Calm*, Ghosh reflects on a similar strategy, where the only voices that are prevalent, are in the support of the government and its motive for change, which overpowered the opinions of the everyday working man. Ghosh also shows how the “Smiling Saviours” “taped the mouths” of the working-class men under “Work More, Talk Less” in the government’s initiative of increasing productivity (Ghosh p. 128). The author uses these ‘Keep quiet masks’ as symbolic icons to show the “Emergency” took away the freedom of expression from the common man, who was now under constant surveillance and scrutiny of the government. Ghosh applies uses McCloud’s theory on icons to describe identities through inanimate objects where he uses the masks as inanimate objects which provides people with an identity that is removed from any opinion or choice and reduces it to being suppressed and cautious of their speech in public (McCloud p. 38).

Censorship in Journalism was one of the primary ways through which the government tried to conceal the harsh realities of the “Emergency”, by using print media as a tool to applaud the good work they were doing to develop the country. In *Delhi Calm*, Ghosh mentions how the government tapped the phones of the editors so they could minimize the broadcast of any information related to protests, rallies, and opposition of any kind. Paul Subin in his article, “When India Was Indira”: Indian Express's Coverage of the

“Emergency” (1975-77)” compares the censorship during the “Emergency” to that during the British rule where he found “52 [similar] photograph captions referring directly or indirectly to the “Emergency” are catchphrases: ‘single theme Statements, taglines, titles or slogans’ that capture the essence of events”. These advertisements were directed predominantly towards making the nation’s situation look promising, to convince the people that the “Emergency” was in fact, an appropriate decision for the development of the country. Ghosh uses McCloud’s “(...) power of cartoons to command viewer involvement and identification, and realism to capture the beauty and complexity of the visible world” (McCloud p. 204) to illustrate the environment of the press office and the people in it. He uses cartoons to show the queue of reporters with fingers on their lips to show that they did not have a significant voice in media, and that every person in that office was under surveillance. He uses more details in his background to depict the “bureaucratic mystique” of the government offices, and how it is meant to monitor and control the circulation of any detrimental news about the “Emergency”, that could harm the reputation of the Prime Minister (Ghosh p. 142-143). This censorship of press removed the voices of the people who were being subjugated, and instead of reporting issues of unemployment, lack of water and electricity, and police brutality, they fixated on topics that were approved by the government. This helped the government establish a false identity of their actions, while also attempting to brainwash the masses by providing them with fabricated information.

Along with dominating the national media, Ghosh shows how the government used tourists and international reporters to their benefit by using their narratives which were orchestrated by the government in the first place. In *Delhi Calm*, Ghosh uses examples of sterilization camps where the “Smiling Saviours” made it look like the people were voluntarily participating and appreciating the new regulations of the “Emergency”, in front of the international journalist Thomas Melado who would then document this selective

information in the press. In “Selective Control: The Political Economy of Censorship”, an article by Cristina Corduneanu-Huci and Alexander Hamilton explains how this allows the political leaders to “(...) pursue private agendas, including corrupt activities and abuses of power or contested public policies, without running the risk of criticism and without the threats of collective action that an information-free environment can facilitate” (p. 6). This also enables the government to use specific stories for their advantage, where they can portray their actions as noble and progressive for their nation. Ghosh through his graphics, explains how the media conveniently excludes the consequences people had to face if they tried to tell anyone their real story. Ghosh uses McCloud’s “Duo-specific panels in which words and pictures send essentially the same message” to describe the plight of a young journalist Vibhuti Prasad who is forced to drink urine by an officer for trying to pass some real information to the international reporter. While the graphic depicts the cruel expressions of the police officer, the text characterizes the heinousness of his actions. Through this example, Ghosh explains how these singular narratives are often left undocumented in the government’s aim of glorifying their work as virtuous and dignified.

The “Emergency” which the government claimed was for the betterment of the nation, was actually the Prime Minister’s approach to remain in power and govern the people through rigorous laws. In this process, the existence of the common public was reduced to a great extent where they were referred to as inferior and needed hard discipline to develop into a new and progressive nation. Albert Memmi, in his book “The Colonizer and the Colonized” explains how “the colonized means little to the colonizer. Far from wanting to understand him as he really is, the colonizer is preoccupied by making him undergo this current change (p. 83). The colonizer is not concerned with the conditions of the colonized, as long as he is able to exercise his power on them and continue to push his ideologies on the colonized. The colonized are thus, often described through the eyes of the colonizer where they are depicted

as “(...) a coward who is afraid of suffering as a brute who is not checked by any inhibitions of civilization (...)” (Memmi p. 83). This provides the colonizer with the authority to enforce new rules in the guise of helping the colonized, by further subjugating them so the colonizer can continue to remain in power. Ghosh explains this ideology when one of the “Smiling Saviours” who is broadcasting the government’s message of cleanliness, refers to the common public as “socially undesirables” (Ghosh p. 191). This creates a disparity between the people and the government, where the government makes the people feel they are not civilized enough, and they need the government to create a new and beautiful India. Ghosh uses McCloud’s “word specific combinations, where pictures illustrate, but don’t significantly add to a largely complete text” to show the readers how the government tried to make the city better as they promised. Ghosh uses detailed text along with pictures of bulldozers and tractors to highlight that the government actually tore down “most of the legal private houses” of poor people who had even paid house taxes by declaring them as slum regions (Ghosh p. 193). The government was not concerned with how this would affect the lives of people, as they dedicated their time to make the city “look” beautiful, so they can live up to their commitment of making India clean and continue their reign. They in turn, reduced the identity of the common population to objects they could use in this agenda, and continued to operate with a colonial mindset.

While the people tried to make sense of the “Emergency”, the government continued to exploit them through welfare programs, meant to ‘uplift’ the underprivileged and the masses, so they could convince masses that the “Emergency” was crucial for progress. In order to prescribe a new identity to the country, they advertised these progressive measures in the media and conveniently excluded the authoritarian means by which they achieved it. Memmi explains how the colonizer and the colonized’s lives are intertwined and the reason they help them is because the colonizer “(...) hopes to go on living in the colony” (p. 36). By

showing acts of advancement, the colonizer attempts to persuade the colonized into believing that they will need to remain in power for their betterment. Ghosh explains this strategy through the “five-point program”(Ghosh p. 157) implemented by the government to dignify the political leadership of the Prime Minister’s son (Prince) in the development of the nation. He tries to create an impression that he was one with the people by placing himself at the forefront of their struggle where he shows his active involvement in the automobile factory or planting trees. Though the government tried to portray this as a useful change for a clean India, under this five-point program, they had “to get rid of the slums immediately”, which cost innocent people their rightful homes (Ghosh p. 197). This attempt to make the “Emergency” look resourceful led to sudden measures that mainly affected the lives of the average citizen, and not the members of the government. This created a difference in privilege which could not be altered even with the Prince’s constant efforts to make it look otherwise. Ghosh uses McCloud’s theory on realistic drawings vs cartoons to describe the Prince’s role in the eyes of the people, where he uses a realistic drawing of the prince to show the readers “the face of another” instead of cartoons in which they could see themselves (Ghosh p. 157, McCloud p. 36). Ghosh tries to focus on his appearance which is detailed through his graphics to show the absence of similarity in his features and the masses to explain that despite his multiple attempts, he will never really be seen as one of the people, because he lacks the ability to see the suffering caused due to these regulations.

The end of the “Emergency” emulates the behavior of the colonizer, where after exploiting people for their agenda, the government refuses to take responsibility for any extremities or torture, by distancing themselves from the consequences. Memmi explains how colonization causes inevitable harm to the colonized as “it places [them] before an alternative having equally disastrous results; daily injustice accepted for [their] benefit on the one hand and necessary, but never consummated self-sacrifice on the other” (p. 147). The

colonizer thus cannot be oblivious to the harm caused under their regime, but chooses to neglect it, in order to create a clear conscience and declare that the aftermath is a result of the shortcomings of the colonized and not the flawed management of the colonizer. Ghosh displays this in the novel when the Prime Minister lifts the “Emergency” by proclaiming that the “Emergency” ‘nursed [the country] back to normal’ (Ghosh p. 224), while also pleading “ignorance of any excesses that might have happened during the “Emergency” (p. 239), thus removing the government from owing any explanations to the general public for their suffering. Ghosh further shows how the act of lifting the “Emergency” was sensationalized by giving people back their fundamental rights and freedom of expression, but does not account for the 60,000 arrests, lathi charges, sterilizations of men and women implemented during this period of “Emergency”. Ghosh uses McCloud’s theory on non-visual awareness to show how the government justified their disinvolvement by using policemen and “Smiling Saviours” as icons of the “Emergency” to conduct acts of violence on the people (Ghosh p. 197, McCloud p. 38). Through this strategy, the government once more creates a selective awareness of the situation, where they use ignorance as an excuse for their actions and shift the blame to people who work as representatives for the government.

Ghosh’s *Delhi Calm* reinstates the purpose of colonization and how in order to create a need for the colonizer to impart culture, they first create a situation that demands colonial assistance. The novel shows that despite declaring the end of the “Emergency”, the government had failed to provide a new identity to the country, by eradicating poverty or removing barriers of the caste system like they had promised. Pramod Nayar, in his article “Postcolonial Demo-graphics” explains how this “forced a re-evaluation of India’s political modernity with debates on the nature of the state, of citizenship, and of democratic processes (p. 139). The novel further shows how this period was not beneficial for the common citizens, and after all the suppressing, they just accepted their fate and tried to move on from this



tragedy. Memmi explains this doctrine when he states that “since colonized society does not possess national structures and cannot conceive of a historical future for itself, it must be content with the passive sluggishness of its present” (p. 101). The only way for the colonized to move on is to try and make sense of the aftermath to continue with their ‘normal’ lives, which conflicts with their experiences during the colonial regime, since they cannot go back to being who they were before, nor can they completely remove themselves from this period. Ghosh explains this conflict at the end of the novel by using McCloud’s theory on colors where he emphasizes the depth of the whole scene by making it virtually about color (Ghosh p. 242, McCloud p. 190). He uses color combinations of faded brown and black to describe the aftermath of the “Emergency”, where the common man’s existence fades into nothingness.

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## Conclusion

Graphic novels provide a different layer of perspective in postcolonial studies from novels without visual art, as readers can observe how colonization attempts to confuse people of their identities in order to create a need for its presence. The graphics allow the readers to see similarities from their own lives which helps them empathize with people who had no contribution or choice in the process but were forced to participate in an obscure agenda. Postcolonial theory also offers clarity on the different ways by which the colonized people lost their freedom, and its consequences that destroyed their understanding of themselves and others. The readers can witness the characters struggle with their identities in these graphic novels as they are unable to make sense of the circumstances during and after the colonial regime and are constantly trying to find ways to overcome their suffering by creating a new self that is distanced from their colonized identity.

The works represent the main idea of colonization, where the freedom and safety of the common masses are sacrificed in the pretext of the colonial idea of imparting culture. These graphic novels are valuable in depicting the distorted scheme of colonization, through graphic themes that allows the reader to further involve themselves in the lives of the colonized, by observing the background visuals and relating it to the text. The graphics also help question the general idea of colonization, where the colonized are considered inferior and lacking in culture. However, when observed through personal narratives, the readers notice the complexities in the colonial regime which exploits people under the pretence of uplifting them.

The influence of the colonial hierarchy or superpowers continue to control the mindset of people where they find it difficult to remove themselves from it. As a result, colonization will always remain a part of their identity, both for the colonizer and the

colonized, not only as a subject in history but in overcoming its aftermath as well. The effects of colonization can be explored at a more individual level, by which the characters are humanized and depicted as people, instead of being considered as subordinates. With the use of graphics, these narratives novels emphasize on the characters' quest for identity or in some instances, the lack of identity entirely, which is a direct by-product of colonization.

Colonization often fails to provide a culture to the colonized and ends up distancing the people from their own identity, and in turn disrupts the individual's understanding of themselves. Multiple attempts to remove themselves from a culture does not essentially allow the characters to immerse in another and cannot provide them with a newfound existence. In addition to that, they now live in a continuous fear of their lives, having forgotten who they used to be before colonial involvement, lost as human beings trying to make meaning of their lives.